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NEWS RELEASE

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MEN UNITE TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

How can men become allies in preventing violence against women?

That question will be tackled next week during Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is calling all interested men to begin the discussion around the issue of violence against women by men. A forum for interested men will be held at the Double Tree Riverside on Tuesday, April 27, from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m.

The meeting is for fathers, coaches, teachers, health professionals, community supporters, students, faith-based representatives and other men who are interested in doing more in their communities and organizations to mentor men, and provide outreach and education to prevent violence against women.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), and although SAAM is only recognized once a year, the problem of sexual violence is ever-present. A recent state report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 5 women have been raped before the age of 18. Idaho ranks in the top five states in the nation for forcible rapes, making rape a significant public health problem.

"At the heart of sexual violence statistics are the countless victims and potential victims who are our sisters, mothers and daughters," says L. Kaili McCray, Manager of the Injury and Violence Prevention Unit for Health and Welfare. "Men have a huge stake in preventing violence against women. Together we can reach out to other men and prevent the type of behaviors that perpetuate violence."

Since most men are non-violent, the Department of Health and Welfare is utilizing a 'bystander' approach by engaging the majority of non-violent men to take action or intervene in situations where there is potential for women to be victimized. Special attention will be given to the intervention and mentoring of young men in preventing violence against women.

In addition to uniting men in preventing violence against women, the meeting will provide a venue for men to network, identify needs, share experiences and identify future steps. All meeting attendees will be provided 'Tool Boxes' of proven strategies for working with men, particularly young men.

The meeting is sponsored by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Injury and Violence Prevention Unit, and will be held in the Liberty room, located in the north wing of the Double Tree Riverside Hotel. Refreshments will be served. For more information please contact L. Kaili McCray at 334-0614.

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(Editors: For more information, contact Kaili McCray, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Boise, 334-0614.)